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National Historical Park

Testimony

Before the Subcommittee on National Parks,
Recreation and Public Lands

Committee on Resources

United States House of Representatives

H.R. 3305

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

June 15, 2004

STATEMENT OF SCOT M. FAULKNER, PRESIDENT OF FRIENDS OF HARPERS FERRY NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, RECREATION AND PUBLIC LANDS; COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES; CONCERNING H.R. 3305

June 15, 2004

Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to comment on H.R. 3305, a bill to increase the authorized acreage for Harpers Ferry National Historical Park in the state of West Virginia.

There are four key issues to keep in mind about this legislation:

- (1) H.R. 3305 is primarily a codification of five years of interagency agreements. The federal government already owns approximately 85 percent of the acreage in this bill. This includes 772 acres, plus 100 acres of survey "buffer" [*See Attachment #1*]. Preservation groups hold another 177 acres. The remaining 191 acres authorize the Park to acquire private land only from willing sellers. Acquisition via condemnation, seizure or eminent domain is explicitly prohibited in the legislation.
- (2) All major local and regional media, the Jefferson County Commission, and the area's state legislative delegation, endorse this legislation.
- (3) There is overwhelming support from local citizens for H.R. 3305. In response to a mandate from the Congress (SR 106-312), Harpers Ferry National Historical Park conducted an outreach program to determine if there was a public consensus for expanding the Park. The outreach survey, conducted March-June 2002, included public hearings, meetings with 41 community groups, and mailings to local residents and adjacent property owners. The survey documented that 94 percent of the 3,495 responses endorsed expansion of the Park.
- (4) This bill has no budgetary impact. Harpers Ferry National Historical Park is already maintaining the acreage owned by other federal agencies and preservation groups through a series of formal agreements. The vast majority of the 1,240 acres is productive farmland that, consistent with long-standing Park policy, will continue to be, or would be, leased to private farmers for agricultural use.

This legislation will prevent costly duplications of effort by federal agencies in the Harpers Ferry area. Currently, the 772 acres of federal land is managed through agreements with the Appalachian Trail National Park, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of Interior, the U.S. Customs Service, and the Treasury Department. H.R. 3305 clarifies this complex and potentially costly situation, once and for all.

This legislation is also important because the increase in authorized acreage allows Harpers Ferry National Historical Park to accept anticipated donations of adjoining land in the coming years as local families and national preservation groups conclude sales of key parcels. Many of these preservation groups, by their own charters, can only expend funds and acquire land if there is a “reasonable expectation” that the land will be included in the National Park system. Delaying H.R. 3305, jeopardizes a number of these negotiations with willing sellers. These willing sellers are interested in preserving our nation’s history, but also need to provide for their children’s financial future. Any delay in government action, will adversely affect these mutually beneficial private transactions.

Completion of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park would be a great catalyst for regional economic growth and job creation. The average visitor to Harpers Ferry National Historical Park currently spends \$36.00 per person per day in the local economy. Adding School House Ridge to Harpers Ferry National Historical Park would increase this to over \$100 a day. The enriched visitor experience would lead to increased tourist time in the area, including a higher percentage of overnight guest stays. All of this increased tourist revenue would go to family-owned small businesses and generate new jobs and small business start-ups in the area.

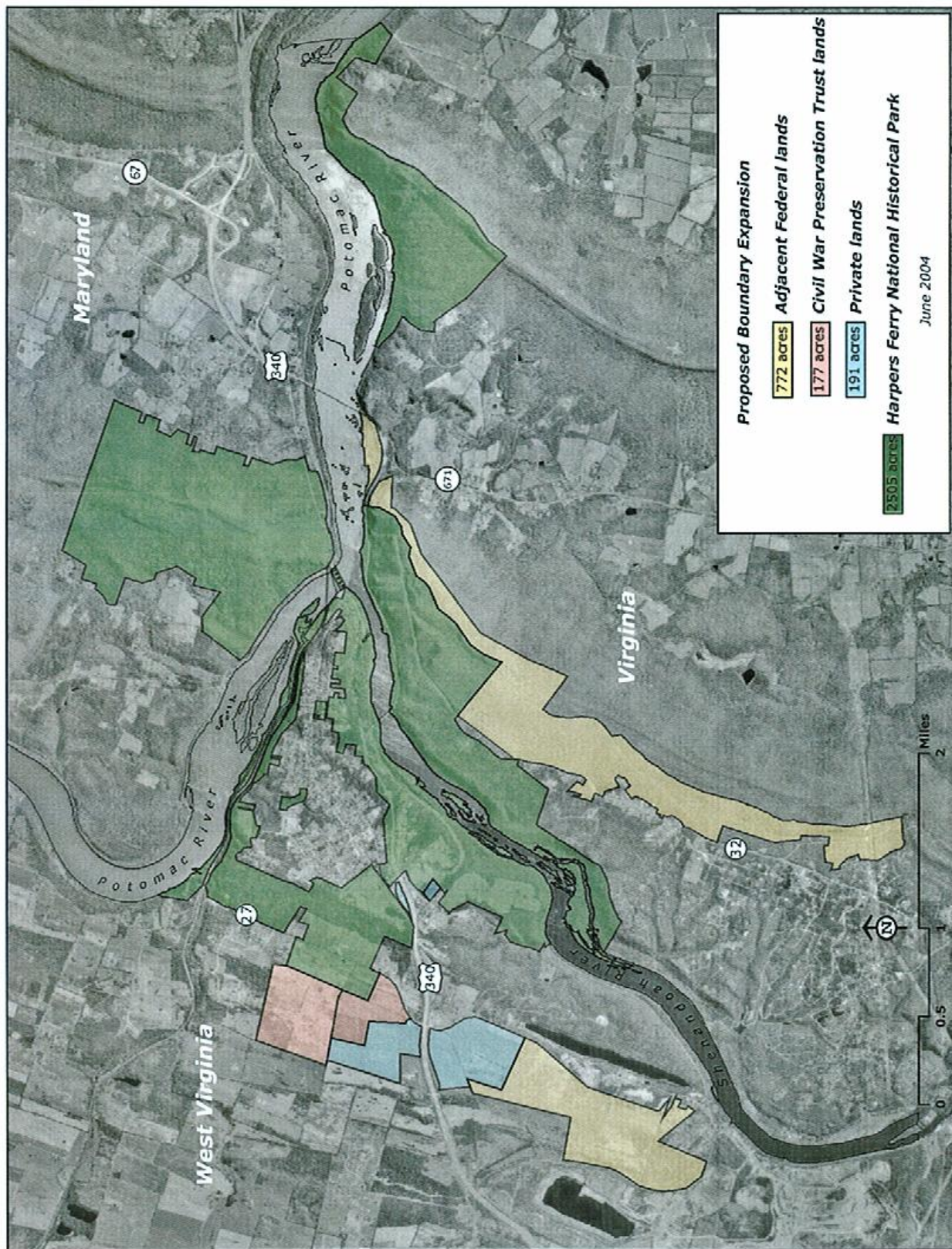
Finally, this legislation is important because it “completes” the preservation of the Harpers Ferry story. What would happen to the story of Gettysburg if people could not visit Seminary Ridge? What about the story of D-Day if people could not see Omaha Beach? That is how important School House Ridge is to the story of Harpers Ferry and to America.

From September 13-15, 1862, School House Ridge served as the line of battle from which Confederate General Thomas J. Stonewall Jackson successfully laid siege to Union forces in Harpers Ferry. This was the largest battle in West Virginia, involving 38,000 troops. The subsequent surrender of Harpers Ferry was the largest surrender of United States’ forces prior to the fall of Corregidor in 1942. Most importantly, the surrender of Harpers Ferry set in motion a series of events that led to President Abraham Lincoln issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, ending slavery in the Southern States.

On June 30, 1944, while American and Allied troops were still fighting their way inland from their Normandy beachhead, President Franklin Roosevelt signed legislation designating Harpers Ferry as a National Monument. Now, as we commemorate the 60th Anniversary of D-Day and the liberation of Europe, it would be timely and appropriate to complete the preservation of this important part of American history.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my prepared remarks. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or members of the committee may have.

ATTACHMENT 1 – Harpers Ferry Map





OVERVIEW

Founded in 1988, Friends of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park helps promote community awareness of the historical resources in the Harpers Ferry area. The group, comprising local citizens, fosters dialogue and cooperation between the National Park, local government, national organizations, and local residents.

In 1994, Friends of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park oversaw the Fiftieth Anniversary of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Over 60,000 visitors attended twelve months of special programs, including a revival of the Broadway play about the John Brown trial, "The Anvil"; and the first ever Civil War Concert and fireworks display on Bolivar Heights.

Friends of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park is an official Park "Friends" group, recognized by the Department of Interior. The organization was awarded the Partner of the Year Award in 1994, by the National Capital Region of the National Park Service.

ACTIVITIES

Friends of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park sponsors a number of ongoing activities:

- Preservation of historic property in the Harpers Ferry area.
- Advocacy for historic preservation, and support of National Park programs.
- Public outreach and awareness of the unique historic, scenic, and natural resources of the Harpers Ferry area.
- Promotion of heritage tourism.
- Coordination with local and national associations with similar objectives, including the Civil War Preservation Trust, the Harpers Ferry Historical Association, and Harpers Ferry Main Street.

Friends of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park is an activity-based volunteer organization. There are no dues, just a willingness to participate and assist in the projects sponsored by the organization.